

HB0365 School Construction - Local Cost-Share - Alterations

February 6, 2024

Appropriations Committee

SUPPORT

Good afternoon Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang and members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Francoise Sullivan. I am the Vice President of the Kent County Public Schools Board of Education. But today I would like to also speak to you as a parent.

Kent County is small. Possibly smaller than you can imagine. We have a total of 5 schools – 3 elementary schools, 1 middle school and 1 high school. The 3 elementary schools are located in the far north, middle and far south of the county. The middle school holds ALL of the county's public school students in grades 6, 7 and 8.

Both of my children attend Kent County Public Schools. My oldest graduated from Kent County middle school last June and my youngest started attending the middle school this past September. I have spent many hours in the middle school attending parent/teacher conferences, PTA and school events and as part of the KCPS Facilities Strategic Planning Committee. I have seen almost every inch of the building. When the students are there it is loud and boisterous and as cheerful as any middle school could be. But when they aren't there you begin to notice the cracks, the leaks, the water stains. You see the paint peeling, the classrooms with no windows. You feel the temperature change from the heat of the 2nd floor to the chill of the 1st floor. You feel the age of the building. As much care as the custodial staff has put into it over the years the fact that it is an almost 80 year old building is apparent.

All parents want the best possible learning environment for their children. A new middle school would offer updated technology, better-equipped classrooms, and expanded resources. It would ensure that children have access to the best possible educational tools. Kent County Middle School was originally constructed to be a high school and meet the needs of a 1950's high school student. It was converted to a middle school in the 1970's to meet the needs of those students. A new school would address the educational needs of our current and future students.

Without the Local Cost Share alterations proposed in this bill Kent County simply cannot afford to make a new middle school a reality. I sincerely hope that you will see our need and support this bill.

Thank you for your time.

Francoise Sullivan
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